

them from their sad plight. As they heard that the Sixteen-foot Buddha of Daian-ji 大安寺丈六<sup>6</sup> would respond to the people's prayers, they sent a man to visit the temple and have scriptures recited. They made an appeal to the monks, saying, "When we are led to court, please open the southern gate of the temple so that we may pay homage to the Buddha. Also we beg you to ring the bell when we are taken to court so that the sound of the bell may follow us."

According to their wishes, the monks rang the bell, recited scriptures,<sup>7</sup> and opened the gate so that the people might worship. The latter were sent to court by the messengers and confined in a guard-room.<sup>8</sup> Just then a prince was born,<sup>9</sup> and the emperor granted a general amnesty to criminals and did not punish them. Instead, he gave alms to the people, and their happiness and joy could not be measured.

We learn that this is due to the influence of the Sixteen-foot Buddha and the merit of reciting scriptures.

## 33

### *On the Miraculous Survival of a Buddha's Picture Offered by a Widow Who Made a Vow to Have It Painted for Her Deceased Husband<sup>1</sup>*

There is a painted image of Amida 阿彌陀<sup>2</sup> in the Hara-dera 八多寺<sup>3</sup> in Ishikawa district, Kawachi province 河内國石川郡.<sup>4</sup> Villagers say that a wise woman once lived in this neighborhood, but her name is

6. Daian-ji was located at the West Side of Nara, on the way to the court from the southern district. *Jo-tokeu* means one *jo* — 丈 and six *shaku* 六尺, which is about sixteen feet. One *jo* is ten *shaku* and one *shaku* is about one foot.

7. 轉讀 *rendoku*; a ritual reading of scriptures or portions of lengthy scriptures. Since the *Dai hamya-kyō* is a voluminous scripture, some portions of it are read in a service. When we think of the probable relation between Daian-ji and the study of this scripture (see Chap. II (1) c, n. 65), this passage also may be translated "... read portions of the *Dai hamya-kyō*..."

8. 授刀瘡; an office for the imperial guards which was instituted in 707. Only those who had committed some crime against the emperor were imprisoned there. See *Shōku Nihongi*, IV (Kenm 4:7:21): "The Office of Tachihaki no Toneri was created."

9. See *ibid.*, X (Jinki 4:9:29, 4:10:5).

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XII, 18).

2. See Chap. II(3)b, n. 132.

3. Unidentified; it may be a temple of the Hara family, originally immigrated from China by way of Korea.

4. Present Mimami-kawachi-gun, Ōsaka-fu

unknown. On the day her husband was dying, she vowed to make an image of Amida, but many years passed and the vow was not fulfilled because of her poverty.

One autumn she gleaned in the rice fields, commissioned a painter, and made offerings to the dead for the first time, weeping in her sorrow. In sympathy, the painter joined in her devotion and completed a beautiful painting. After a ceremonial feast<sup>5</sup> it was consecrated in the golden hall of the temple, and she paid constant homage to it.

A thief later set fire to the hall, and it was destroyed. Only the Buddha image survived the fire, suffering no damage.

Wasn't it a miraculous work of Buddha to help the woman? The note says: How good a wife she was in holding a memorial rite for her husband!<sup>6</sup> Eventually she held it in the autumn. We know indeed how devoted she was. Even blazing flames cannot consume the holy image. Heaven's help is beyond our comprehension.

## 34

### *On Taking Back Silk Robes Once Stolen Owing to the Petition to Bodhisattva Myōken<sup>1</sup>*

Once there was a house in front of the Kisakibe-dera 私部寺<sup>2</sup> in Ate district, Kii province 紀伊國安部郡.<sup>3</sup> As ten silk robes were stolen from the owners, they prayed devotedly through Bodhisattva Myōken 妙見菩薩<sup>4</sup> in the temple. The stolen silk robes were sold to a merchant in Kii. Hardly a week passed before a gale hit, and the robes were whisked south on the back of a deer to the original owners' garden; the deer then disappeared in the heavens. The merchant who had bought them, hearing that they were stolen goods, did not ask for them back but kept quiet.

5. 齋會 *sai*; a (dedication) ceremony in which a vegetarian feast is offered. See I.24, n. 3.

6. 追遠報恩 *tsūen hōon*; *tsūen* means "perform proper rites to pray for the dead," and *hōon* means "repay for the kindness, love given." It is customary during the first year after a person's death to perform various religious acts in the hopes that the merits accumulated by such acts may benefit the deceased.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XVII, 4).

2. Unidentified.

3. Present Arita-gun, Wakayama-ken 和歌山縣有田郡.

4. See Chap. II(3)b, n. 133.